



*Calculation
Post
CMA*

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

April 30, 1959

JAMH. 024
CRBIB#00477

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H30-DCA

373/132919

REGION FIVE		INITIAL AND DATE
MAY 6 - 1959		
✓ REG. DIRECTOR		
✓ ASST. REG. DIR.		
✓ OPERATIONS	866 5/7 AC	
✓ INTERPRETATION	MM 5/6	
ADM.		
REC RES. PLAN		
RANGER ACT'S		

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Five

From: Chief Architect

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I - Custom House,
Salem Maritime

The Historic Structures Report, Part I - Custom House,
Salem Maritime National Historic Site, has been reviewed by the
interested Divisions in the Washington Office and is recommended
for approval.

Dick Sutton

Dick Sutton
Chief Architect

Copy to: Chief, EODC (2)
Supt., Salem Maritime

Info	OPERATIONS	Act	Initial and Date
	Lands		
	Engineer		
←	Architect		RAC
	Land Archt		
✓	Programs		

Region Five
421 Walnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

April 21, 1959

Nelligan
4/20

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Salem Maritime National Historic Site
From: Acting Regional Director
Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I - Custom House

This office concurs with the recommendation made in the subject report, namely, that the paint color scheme suggested by Professor Connally be followed. However, we believe the estimate for the work is somewhat low.

(Sgd.) George A. Palmer

George A. Palmer
Acting Regional Director

In duplicate

Copy to: Director
Chief, EODC

MHNelligan/cp

General ✓
Daily
Area
Operations Division

4/13/59

Historic Structures Report, Part I - CUSTOM HOUSE
SALEM MARITIME NHS

INTERPRETATION

History	
Nat. His.	
Archeo	
Publ.	
Museum	
St.	

Agree we should follow the Connally
paint reco. The area should be asked
for a PCP covering construction-fundable
further research in this building

OPERATIONS

4/15/59
Paint color as recommended
by Dr. Connally should be
specified. Estimate of work
too low. Painting and back
printing by contract. Any millwork
replacement will be done by dry color.

ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTOR

OK for painting. We can
always correct a painting error.
4/17/59

REGIONAL DIRECTOR

I assume the job of painting of
trim is because the trim needs
painting at this time - not just a
change of color. On that basis, I agree.

COMMENTS DUE 4/23

Region Five
421 Walnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

April 13, 1959

Memorandum

To: Director

From: Regional Director

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I - Custom House
Salem Maritime National Historic Site

In accordance with the procedure outlined in FO-11-56, attached for review is the Historic Structures Report, Part I, for the Custom House, Salem Maritime National Historic Site. By copy of this memorandum, we are also forwarding a copy of the report to EODC for review and comment.

Comments to the Superintendent are due no later than April 23.

(Sgd.) Daniel J. Tobin

Daniel J. Tobin
Regional Director

In duplicate

Attachments

Copy to: Chief, EODC, w/copy report
Supt., Salem Maritime, w/copy of report

cp
General
Daily
Area
Regional Chief of Operations

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

SALEM MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
Custom House, Derby Street
Salem, Massachusetts

April 3, 1959

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Five
From: Superintendent, Salem Maritime National Historic Site
Subject: Historic Building Report - Custom House and Derby House

Attached for your review are copies, in quintuplicate, of two Historic Building Reports. One relates to the Custom House; the other to the Derby House.

The preparation of a similar report on the Rum Shop presents a perplexing problem. There is a complete lack of basic historical data on this building. It is thus practically impossible at this time to assemble the report. Later in the year when the seasonal ranger-historians report for duty, I may find the time to investigate the history of this structure.

Research in this instance is definitely required for a Historic Building Report on the Rum Shop.

Harold I. Lessem
Superintendent

Attachments

Region 1

SIGNATURE SHEET

RECOMMENDED

Director Date _____

Regional Director Date _____

Chief, Eastern Office, Div. of Design & Construction Date _____

APPROVED

Superintendent Date _____

Historic Structure Report
on
the Custom House

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Prepared by
Staff
Salem Maritime National Historic Site
Salem, Massachusetts

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April, 1959

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Section 1. The Name and Number of Building

Section 2. Approved Use

Section 3. Provision for Operating the Building

Section 4. Preliminary Estimate of Cost for
Rehabilitating the Building

Section 5. Recommendation for Research

CHAPTER II. HISTORICAL DATA

Section 1. Historical Introduction to the Structure

Section 2. Historical Associations

Section 3. Historical Evaluation

CHAPTER III. ARCHITECTURAL STATEMENT

CHAPTER I
ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Prepared by Superintendent H. I. Lessem

NAME AND NUMBER OF BUILDING

Custom House, Building No. 1.

APPROVED USE OF BUILDING

The Custom House is used as a combination museum, visitor center, and park headquarters. The approved MISSION 66 Development Plan and the Master Plan assign the same functions to the structure.

PROVISION FOR OPERATING THE BUILDING

The Custom House is and will be operated with regularly appropriated funds. No departure from this practice is contemplated. Nor is it proposed to enter any cooperative agreements in the operation of this building.

PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE OF COST FOR REHABILITATING THE STRUCTURE

It is proposed to strip the existing paint on the exterior trim of the Custom House, and to repaint same matching the original colors as closely as possible. In the paint removal process, every effort will be made to record and preserve original evidence.

Secondly, to replace obsolete, defective temperature control unit on central heating system with a modern unit.

Cost	
Painting.	\$1,500
Replace unit.	600
Total.	<u>\$2,100</u>

RECOMMENDATION FOR RESEARCH

Professor Connally of the University of Illinois is preparing an architectural history of this building. He is fortunate in the large amount of original material available, specifications, vouchers, official correspondence, etc. When this report is submitted this spring, it should be carefully studied. If there are any gaps due to lack of documentary material, a research project should be organized to attempt to uncover the desired material. For example, the original drawings of the buildings have not been found; nor has any material on the original exterior colors been discovered.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL DATA

Section 1 comprises report on Custom House
prepared by Edwin Small in August 1954

Sections 2-3 prepared by Superintendent Lessem

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STRUCTURE

This section is covered by the attached report prepared by former superintendent Edwin W. Small, dated August 16, 1954.

August 16, 1954

Notes on the Custom House
Part of Salem Maritime National Historic Site
Derby Street, Salem, Massachusetts

by Edwin W. Small, Superintendent

The Essex Register, Salem, July 18, 1818, carried the following item:

NEW CUSTOM HOUSE.

NOTICE.

The Government of the U. States have directed that a Custom House and Public Stores should be built in the Port of Salem, Mass. on the site fronting Derby Street late the Homestead of George Crowninshield Sen. Esq. deceased, Notice is hereby given, that proposals will be received by the subscriber until the 28th day of July inst. under seal from all persons who may be disposed to furnish the material and complete the foresaid Buildings in conformity to the Plans, which may at any time, previously be examined by John Saunders Esq., Surveyor.

William R. Lee.
Collector.

July 15.

The "Homestead of George Crowninshield," mentioned in the notice, consisted of a "Mansion House," about 50 feet by 38 feet, a "Wood-house," "Out house" and "Stable" on a lot approximately 80 feet by 200 feet with an ample garden on the easterly side of Orange Street and directly opposite Derby Wharf on the water side of Derby Street. A committee of five prominent Salem merchants, appointed to select a suitable site for the Custom House, had reported favorably on the location May 26, 1818, and the Government had acquired it from the Crowninshield Estate for the sum of \$5,000. George Crowninshield, the owner, had died in 1815 and his wife two years earlier.

By an alliance in 1757 with Mary Derby, daughter of Captain Richard Derby and sister of the great merchant, Elias Hasket Derby, George Crowninshield had not only married into an illustrious seafaring family but also became the progenitor of one of his own. His six sons went to sea in their early teens and except the youngest, who died in the West Indies at the age of fourteen, all became shipmasters before they were twenty. With practical experience of this type to build on, the shipping and mercantile firm of George Crowninshield and Sons was formed and operated until 1809.

After 1800, at least two of the sons became important politically in the party of Thomas Jefferson. Jacob, a member of Congress for eight years, declined the post of Secretary of the Navy in Jefferson's Cabinet. A younger brother, Benjamin, however, accepted the position under Madison and held it from 1814 to 1818. Another brother, George Crowninshield, Jr., who died in 1817, was the owner of Cleopatra's Barge, the first American oceangoing yacht launched at Salem, October 21, 1816. Through the beneficence of Mrs. Francis B. Crowninshield, a replica of the cabin from Cleopatra's Barge, with some of the original furnishings, is now on display at the Peabody Museum of Salem as part of a new wing formally opened September 11, 1953.

The property purchased in 1818 as the site for the ~~New~~ Custom House had been part of the inheritance Mary Derby Crowninshield received from her father, Captain Richard Derby, 1712-1783. The latter had found it desirable to buy the lot with a house on it in 1774 in order to eliminate a tavern kept there by David Ropes, an inn-holder. The house built by David Ropes and used as a tavern, reports indicate, was a fine, square, two-story, wooden structure during the Crowninshield period of occupancy, with pilasters on the front and a cupola on the roof, crowned with the figure of a merchant holding a spy-glass at arm's length and "scanning the horizon for his returning argosies."

As a measure, doubtless to protect his residential estate, George Crowninshield bought in 1799 the lot on the westerly side of Orange Street, opposite the present Custom House. It had been occupied by a blacksmith's forge and probably an older dwelling. Here in 1810-1811 a brick mansion designed by Samuel McIntire was erected for Benjamin Crowninshield, who made it his home until 1822. The structure was one of the last in Salem designed by McIntire before his death in 1811. Since 1861 the property has been the Home for Aged Women, with a long brick addition being extended at the rear of the original house in 1907.

In response to the notice in the Essex Register for the erection of a Government building as a Custom House and Public Stores a number of proposals were received and on August 1, 1818, articles of agreement were drawn up. William Roberts and Ebenezer Slocum, Jr., for \$6,295 were to "find and provide all the Rocks, stones, free stone bricks mortar lead, ironwork, plank and boards and all other materials usually comprehended in mason's work," and Joseph Edwards and David Lord for \$3,321 "all the timber, joice, plank boards and all other materials of every kind that may be necessary and requisite for completing the carpenters work of the outside, including the glazing and single flooring."

The plans on which the mason's and carpenter's proposals were figured have never been located in recent times. We know, however, that economies had to be effected and the design of the buildings as first visualized had to be somewhat modified. This is borne out by Robert S. Rantoul, Collector of the Port, 1865-1869. In the year of his retirement from office, Mr. Rantoul read a paper before the Essex Institute in which he stated the original plan, instead of calling for a single set of granite steps up to the platform of the front portico as constructed, had "two winding flights of steps" approaching the main

entrance from either side, "while four handsome pillars, rising to the entire height of the front, supported a gable in the angle of which the National emblem, a carved eagle and shield, were conspicuously displayed."

The specifications included in the articles of agreement to cover the mason's work did not describe such an elaborate face for the buildings. Detailed data as to dimensions, materials and workmanship, however, were presented to the partners in the mason contract as follows:

The Custom House to be forty-eight by forty feet and the store adjoining to be seventy feet by twenty-eight according to the plan, the basement story to be eight feet high above the ground in front and made of good split rocks and lined up inside with bricks the whole to be two feet thick, the stones outside to be hammered and dressed in the best manner and laid in lime mortar and to be made in 5 courses with a good foundation laid under the basement wall to prevent the building from settling -- the cellar of the store to be seven feet in the clear, and made of good split rocks two feet thick, the underpinning to be good hammered stones and laid in lime mortar, One door and one window on each side of the basement story and two windows in front in conformity to the plan. The frames of the doors in the basement to be made of stone and worked in the best manner, two doors and four windows to be in the store cellar with stone frames to the doors, and iron gratings to all the windows in the basement and store cellar with sashes and well glazed the brick work of the first story of both buildings to be sixteen inches thick, the second and third stories to be twelve inches thick the partition wall to be twelve inches from the cellar to the roof the whole height of the building from the

top of the basement to the top of the cornice to be twenty-eight feet, the ends of the store to be carried up with battlements raised high enough in front to receive and stape the ballustrade against -- three sides of the Custom House and the projections of the store in front to be laid with the best of pressed bricks, the other three sides of the store to be laid with good merchantable bricks the whole to be laid in the best workmanlike manner, and well filled in with mortar -- three stacks of chimnies to be in the Custom House with two fire places in each stack the jambs to be laid with pressed bricks -- the chimnies to be carried to a suitable height above the roof and well secured with lead and collered with putty on the roof. -- Eighteen brick piers to be raised in the cellar and basement story 16 by 12 inches -- The stools to three doors in Custom House to be of free stone, the stools in the store of granite, the caps and sills to all the square windows and the sill to the circular windows to be of free stone the window caps on the Custom House and the front of the store to have a handsome worked doubled key and those on the other part of the store nine -- and free stone bitt of a proper width around the Custom House -- The platform on which the portico will stand will be 29 by 6 feet to be made in three stones placed so the joints will come under the middle columns, the steps in front of the platform will fall short of it three and a half feet at each end and will be twenty-two feet long -- the tread 13 inches the risers 8 inches when laid, the first step to be curtailed so as to admit of a full scroll to the rail -- the tops of the side steps to be six feet, six inches long and four feet wide the other steps four feet long the tread 12 inches, the risers 8 inches when laid, and one quarter scrole at bottom the portico and front and side steps all to be enclosed in a handsome iron railing.

The contractors for the outside carpentry work were instructed in a similar manner:

The Custom House will be forty-eight feet by forty, and the store seventy by twenty-eight feet -- The timbers for the floors of the Custom House to be twelve inches square, the joice twelve inches deep and three inches thick and sixteen inches from centre to centre -- Five timbers to be laid across the floors of the store, the first floor timbers to be fourteen inches square, joice fourteen by $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches and twelve inches from centre to centre the timber and joice for the 2 and 3d stories of the store to be the same size as those of the Custom House, the under floors to be well laid with good merchantable boards and well nailed -- two stair way to be framed in the store and iron dogs on all the timbers that run into the walls -- timber for the roof -- viz; the plates to be ten inches square beams ten inches; the rafters nine by eight inches, the joice five by four inches, and twenty inches from centre to centre, the beams eight feet from centre to centre, the roof to be hipped with two gutters a flat on the top of the roof about thirty-six by thirteen feet -- with a ballustrade around it conformable to the plan well secured with iron braces, the roof and flat to be boarded with good merchantable boards, and shingled with shingles of the first quality a ballustrade on the Custom House and on the front of the store to the battlement walls at the ends of the store conformable to the plan and well secured with iron braces and knees -- the covin to be made in the Ionic Order, the cornice and faces to be made together in order to make the gutter larger in the cornice. Eight tin conductors from the cornice to the

ground with leaden pipes on the back side of the store to be a plain cornice gutter -- to the Custom House there is to be three doors with handsome fan and side lights the front conformable to the plan, the others somewhat different, the doors to be made two inches thick, properly proportioned -- in the Custom House to be nineteen windows, nine with circular heads and ten with square tops with twelve lights in each window, the glass to be 18 by 12 inches, the sashes one and half inches thick, made with noosing moulding, the frames to be made with pullies and fitted with suitable weights for the windows -- two handsome double doors in the basement story, to be two doors in the back side of the store, made to double and well secured -- the windows in the store conformable to the plan, twelve lights in a window the glass fourteen by ten inches, the lower ones to have shutters with good hinges, bars and bolts (keyed) and good and substantial locks to all the doors, and handsome brass latches to the Custom House doors -- the portico to be made in the Doric Order with carved leaves to the capitals and a carved leaf in each triglyph -- the ballustrade according to the plan the whole to be secured to the building with iron bolts and knees -- all the glass in the buildings to be of the Boston manufacture -- It is understood that the under floors of the buildings are not to be laid until the brick work is finished.

According to the articles of agreement the mason's and carpenter's work on the buildings should have been completed November 1, 1818, but they were not done until the latter part of the following winter. The Secretary of the Treasury had originally allowed \$10,000 for the construction of the buildings in addition to the cost of \$5,000 for the lot from the heirs of George Crownin-

shield. Consequently, he was disturbed to learn in a letter from the Collector of the Port of Salem, February 22, 1819, that "an excess beyond the sum appropriated of about 1700 dolls." had been created "by a departure from the original plan, which was not only thought advisable but really necessary by the original contract the roofs of both buildings were to have been shingled, but after a more mature deliberation for the better security of the buildings and the property which might be deposited in the publick stores, it was thought in the opinion of our most respectable merchants whose interest might be at hazard, indispensible that they should be slated."

The slates put on the Custom House at that time are still in place and provide excellent testimony as to the good judgment exercised in making the more expensive substitute of slates for wooden shingles in the original construction. A bill in the Custom House Records dated November 27, 1818, shows that "35 tons Imperial Slate" were procured at \$35 per ton, less $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, or a cost of \$1,194.38. In addition there were bills for freighting the 35 tons of slate from Boston at \$2 a ton or \$70 and wharfage charges at 14 cents a ton or \$4.90. On December 21, 1818, Galbraith and Bulgin submitted their bill from Boston for the labor of handling and laying the slate as follows:

To 4909 feet of Slateing @ 3 ct. pr. ft.	\$147.27
To $1\frac{1}{2}$ days of Slater Storing Slate at Custom Ho. . . .	3.37 $\frac{1}{2}$
To 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ " of Do weighing & Stouing in vessel at Boston at \$2.25 per day	10.68
	<u>\$161.32</u>

The use of slate -- heavier than wooden shingles -- made it necessary to give added strength to "the plan and timber of the roof." The Collector of the Port went on to explain in his letter of February 22, 1819, to the Secretary of the Treasury that the walls were carried up to the plates

"the full thickness begun the better to support the roof, and the store to have a pitched instead of an hiped roof, with battlement walls at the end." These alterations together with outside and inside painting and finishing the offices inside -- work not included in the articles of agreement to cover the general contracting -- prompted the Collector to ask for a further appropriation of \$3,000. This sum the Secretary of the Treasury denied, but by his reply of March 19, 1819, he allowed \$2,000 with the stern reminder that "no deviation from the original plan involving additional expense ought to have been attempted without the previous approbation of this Department."

The painting and finishing work were not completed until midsummer of 1819. Much of it, including additional masonry and carpentry jobs, appears to have been paid for on a day labor basis. From bills tendered, the rate of pay for carpenters ranged from \$1.35 to 1 2/3 dollars a day. Stone cutters, masons and painters, at \$2 a day, commanded somewhat higher remuneration. Funds were sufficient to finish at this time only the first-floor offices, including the entry, stairs and hallway of the second floor. Decoration of the front door, the portico above it, and a window and balustrade over the portico was also completed. Joseph McIntire, Jr., 1779-1852, a nephew of Samuel McIntire, 1757-1811, the well-known architect and wood-carver of Salem, submitted the following bill on May 21, 1819, for carved work that included capitals for the columns of the first-story door and second-story window, leaves and roses for the entablature of the portico and smaller leaves and roses for the front door:

To Carved Work for the Custom House Salem	
" 8 five inch Capitals for Window & Door.	\$34.--
To Carved Work for Balastrade & vernishing Window. . . .	12.--
" Carved Leves 32. at 41 cents & 32 roses @ 25 cts each	21.--
" Carved 10 Smole Leves at 25 cts. & 17 roses at 8 cts.	3.86
	<u>\$70.86</u>

The preparation of plans for the Custom House and Public Stores appears to have been the work of two Customs officers designated as deputy agents to attend to the general construction of the buildings by the Collector of the Port, Colonel William R. Lee, who also was Government agent for erection of the buildings. These officers were John Saunders, Surveyor of the Port, 1818-1830, and Perley Putnam, Weigher and Gauger. Putnam presented an initial plan to the Collector on June 19, 1818, and the Collector sent two drawings to the Secretary of the Treasury on July 1 as the basis for procuring an appropriation to erect the structures. By letter of July 7, the Secretary notified the Collector that "diminution on the size of the buildings" would be necessary to "reduce them to the level of the appropriation," with the result that the plans had to undergo further revision before the articles of agreement for the general masonry and carpentry work were drawn up on August 1.

Saunders and Putnam did not regard their work as deputy agents as part of their regular duties as Customs officers and they avowed that they were never remunerated for their services of drawing plans and superintending the erection of the buildings. When Collector Lee died in office in 1824, they were astonished to find he had made no provision to pay them for their services. A memorial was subsequently prepared and submitted by the congressman from the district on their behalf to the committee on claims in Congress, but as late as May 7, 1834, Putnam was writing a letter on the subject of his claim and contending that "the government never got so much for their money as they did in the building of the Salem Custom House & Public Stores." *

* In 1836 they received \$490.27 for their work. H. I. L.

Robert Rantoul, Collector of the Port, 1865-1869, whose paper read before the Essex Institute in 1869 has already been quoted, held a similar point of view. Up through Rantoul's period of office the Treasury had spent \$35,418.24 on the buildings. He also provided some information as to the sources of materials employed in the construction as follows:

Lumber was brought from Maine, expressly for the purpose, containing boards, which may be seen in the wainscoting, of the very unusual width of twenty-six inches in the clear. The stones used for the underpinning were of the native granite of this region, of the common gray hue, and were blasted out of boulders and ledges found in the pastures of Danvers. The slate-tiles, which are of rare size and thickness, were brought from Wales for this work, and the strangely-colored flag-stones in front of the building were placed there at a later period, being brought from Potsdam, New York, in 1854.

Decoration of the face of the buildings with the patriotic motif of the national symbol, as already shown, had been visualized in the initial design and the idea was not dropped after construction of the buildings got underway. Solomon Willard, a Boston carver and architect, 1783-1861, who later designed and supervised the construction of the Bunker Hill Monument, had indicated to John Galbraith, one of the Boston slaters employed on the roofing job, that he would charge ninety dollars to carve an eagle "like the one upon the State Bank Boston." Galbraith quoted this price to the Collector by letter on September 27, 1819, pointing out at the same time, however, that Willard "had some thoughts of going to England and it would be five or six months before he returned." The matter of Willard turning out this decorative work of art apparently went no further, for Joseph True, a skilful Salem carver,

eventually produced a handsomely executed specimen and on January 19, 1826, presented the following bill:

To making an Eagle for the Custom House --	\$50.00
To Blacksmith's Bill, for iron work to secure the	
Eagle on the House. 99 lb at 17 Cts and work --	16.83
Carpenters Bill three days work at \$1.75 per day --	5.25
Stock for Securing Ballustrade --	1.41
Masons Bill for repairing Slate on House --	<u>1.00</u>
	\$74.49

Nathaniel Hawthorne held the post of Surveyor of the Port, 1846-1849, and it was during these years he wrote his greatest romance, The Scarlet Letter. The introduction to The Scarlet Letter is entitled "The Custom-House" and in it Hawthorne gives his impressions of the building, his associates and the environment in which he worked.

A number of changes were made in the Custom House after it was initially constructed which, needless to say, were not in character with the original style of the building. These additions and alterations were mainly the outcome of the availability of funds for expenditures at two different times: 1853-1854 and 1873. The finishing of the offices on the second floor, the construction of a fireproof vault for records on the first floor and the addition of a cupola at the center of the roof were the chief accomplishments in 1853-1854. In 1873 about \$4,000 was spent to cover the floors of the offices with carpets and cocoa matting and to install up-to-date counters and office furniture of walnut and chestnut. The interior walls were also completely redecorated, with the woodwork being artificially grained in the then fashionable light oak. Major Ben Perley Poore of Newburyport was called in to supervise the work.

Steps to revive the building more nearly to its original character were initiated while David Mason Little served as Collector, 1903-1913. The interior woodwork was repainted white. Buff paint was sandblasted from the exterior brickwork and the wood trim restored to white from brown. The National Park Service assumed custody of the building as part of Salem Maritime National Historic Site in 1937. Work performed by the Service has consisted mainly of urgent rehabilitation and repairs. In the period immediately prior to World War II, however, it was possible to restore the front door and much of the brass hardware on the doors inside, which had been replaced by that of the so-called "Eastlake" pattern, probably in 1873. The counters and other fixed office equipment of 1873 were also removed, and a heavily plastered moulding of the same period on the ceiling of the large east room on the first floor. Further restoration awaits the availability of funds and study of architectural details.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Many of the documents, including letters and bills, relating to the erection of the Custom House and Public Stores are available as part of the Custom House Records. Some of these documents were printed in David Mason Little's article "Documentary History of the Salem Custom House," Essex Institute Historical Collections, Vol. LXVII (1931), pp. 1-26, 145-160 and 265-280. Others appear among these notes for the first time. Information of particular value, in the absence of detailed commentary in the primary sources, is also to be found in Robert S. Rantoul, "The Port of Salem," a paper read before the Essex Institute, June 1869, in Essex Institute Historical Collections, Vol. X, Part I (1869) pp. 52-72, and in Robert S. Rantoul, DeWitt S. Clark and George M. Whipple, A Record of the First Fifty Years of the Old Ladies Home at Salem, 1910. Rantoul, who lived from 1832 to 1922, was in an especially good position as Collector of the Port, 1865-1869, to pick up worthwhile information from his elders and contemporaries as well as his own studies. Fiske Kimball, Mr. Samuel McIntire, Carver, The Architect of Salem, 1940, is also generally helpful.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Custom House stands today as a physical symbol of Salem's remarkable maritime history. Here were collected imposts used to finance the operations of the Federal Government. Here were surveyed and registered many of the vessels illustrious in the annals of our Merchant Marine.

Nathaniel Hawthorne is, of course, intimately associated with this structure. He worked here from 1846 to 1849 as Surveyor of the Port of Salem. The introductory chapter to his great classic, The Scarlet Letter, is titled "The Custom House."

General James Miller, Collector of Customs from 1824 to 1849, was a hero of the War of 1812. At the Battle of Lundy's Lane, he uttered a remark famous in our military tradition, "I'll Try Sir." Miller served as Governor of the Arkansas Territory from 1819 to 1823.

HISTORICAL EVALUATION

The Custom House merits preservation and interpretation for the following reasons:

1. A symbol of an important chapter in our national development, namely, maritime enterprise.
2. Excellence as an example of early 19th century public architecture.
3. Hawthorne association.

CHAPTER III

ARCHITECTURAL STATEMENT

Prepared by Professor Ernest A. Connally

March 10, 1959

Reference: H36

Mr. Charles E. Peterson
Supervising Architect, Historic Structures
National Park Service (ECDC)
120 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

Dear Pete:

Since receiving your very interesting letter of February 26, relative to the exterior painting of the Custom House at Salem, I have sifted through the material which will be included in my report on the building. I believe that I can give you a definitive answer and accurate recommendation. This problem has already been informally discussed with Mr. Lessem, who is much interested in accuracy. He has raised the interesting question: what color was the Custom House painted when the cupola was added in 1853-54, and would it not be better and less anachronistic, therefore, to repaint in the color used in the 1853-54 remodeling? In this letter I shall attempt to answer these questions and enlarge upon my earlier recommendation to Mr. Lessem.

The Custom House was built in 1818-19. It was remodeled internally and the cupola built in 1853-54. It was renovated (substantially repaired and repainted) in 1873, 1896, 1897, and 1901. It was "restored" in 1922. Our knowledge of these operations comes from the original specifications, changes made in the specifications, vouchers for payment, related correspondence, and some photographs. Since the documents are more complete for the more recent renovations, it may be clearer to proceed backward in time.

First of all, it is clear that the Custom House has existed with natural brickwork and white-painted wooden trim, portico, cupola, etc., only since the "restoration" of 1922. This work included the removal of paint from the brick walls by sandblasting. As to the exterior woodwork, the specifications required that the "present or old painted and sanded finish shall be removed in its entirety - down to the original wood surface underneath same."

According to a colored postal card of ca. 1910 the brick walls were yellow, the basement story brown, and most of the wood trim white, prior to the "restoration" of 1922. This color scheme dated from the renovation of 1901. According to the specifications of 1901, the brick walls were to be painted two coats "of approved color." (The color of painting was usually left to the discretion of the Collector and is therefore not always clearly stated; however, it is often indicated by vouchers or other correspondence, as in this case.) The specifications required "Mortar joints horizontal and vertical to be

neatly pencilled in white." However, in execution of the work, Collector Daland changed the color scheme to "colonial yellow with white trimming...instead of red with pencilled joints." In a letter to the Supervising Architect of the Treasury (Aug. 6, 1901), Daland explained the change by saying that he thought it would look better with yellow-painted brick than with the red paint and white joints, the way it had been painted many years earlier. Apparently he was referring, as we shall see, to the renovation of 1853-54.

According to specifications of 1901, the woodwork was to be thoroughly scraped with steel scrapers and then sandpapered. Apparently it was a nagging problem to get the woodwork thoroughly stripped before re-painting, for the specifications elaborate the point: "The idea is to remove the old paint as far as possible before the new paint is applied." This had been attempted in 1897, when the specifications required that the exterior woodwork be scraped, painted and re-sanded. The contractor failed to scrape the woodwork and had to make good. Even so, it was probably unsatisfactory, for it was done all over again only four years later (1901).

The color of paint on the exterior wood between 1897 and 1901 is not entirely clear. However, prior to 1897 and back to 1886 it appears quite certain that the brick walls were painted solid red (without pencilling); and as far back as 1873 the exterior woodwork was painted brown and sanded, in imitation of sandstone. This color scheme is further suggested by a photograph of the 1880's, probably taken after the repairs and repainting of 1886-87.

The specifications of 1886 state: "The entire brick and woodwork on the outside including cupola and fences to be scraped cleaned and painted three (3) coats of the best lead and linseed oil." The Granite base was to be sanded. Also: "All woodwork that is now Sanded including porches, balustrades, pillars, window frames cornices &c to be re-sanded."

It appears certain that the painting of 1886-87 was the first time the exterior brick walls had been painted since the 1853-54 renovation. There is no mention of painting the brickwork in the documents pertaining to the 1873 "modernization," although the brickwork was repaired and repointed at that time. From 1873 to 1886, it seems the brick walls were simply natural brick. In 1879, Ben Perley Poore, in his Report on the Public Buildings of New England, states that the Custom House was in good repair, adding, however, that "the exterior will soon need re-painting and painting." The object here was waterproofing. As an alternative to the painting, he recommended the application of mastic, which, he said, had been used with considerable success within the past ten years on both public and private buildings in eastern Massachusetts. The brick painting of 1886 appears to be the final action on Poore's report.

The renovation of 1873 was primarily a grand Victorianization of the interior. However, the exterior appearance was considerably modified also. Although the brickwork was only repointed and repaired, the exterior woodwork was in part rebuilt or replaced, painted brown and sanded. In his final report to the Supervising Architect (Nov. 30, 1873), the Superintendent reported: "The Painters gilded the large letters on the front of the building, the large eagle on the balustrade, the ornaments on the cupola and the ball on the flagstaff; - painted the cupola, balustrades, eaving, front portico and storm doors with two coats of brown, sanding the last coat; - painted the iron railings on the front and end steps, the iron shutters of the basement, and the ironwork of the flagstaff, balustrades and eagle with two coats of black; - painted the outside window blinds two coats of green, the window frames and sashes two coats of white."

This takes us back now to the critical remodeling of 1853-54, when the cupola was added. And the cupola, it should be noted, is the only major addition to the exterior of the original building. The oldest extant photograph of the Custom House dates from the Civil War period and thus shows the building in its state after the 1853-54 work and before the work of 1873. The photograph shows what appear to be red brick walls with conspicuous white mortar joints (undoubtedly the painting referred to by Baland in 1901). The photograph also shows what might be taken for white woodwork; but it was not white. You may recall the old photograph of the President Johnson House at Greenville, Tenn. It showed the brick walls with pencilling, and from the photograph one might interpret the woodwork as white, when in fact we found it to be ochre. This is precisely the case with the Salem Custom House.

Now to find accurate paint layers on the Custom House is almost impossible, since the woodwork was stripped in 1886, 1897, 1901, and 1922. However, in the summer of 1938, we found thick layers behind the acanthus leaves of the portico columns - inaccessible places undoubtedly missed by the many strippers. Under the white we found brown with sand. Under the brown only ochre next to the wood. This corroborates the documents and further suggests that the exterior woodwork was originally (1819) painted ochre and was painted ochre again in 1853-54. (No sand until 1873.)

Here are some of the details from the paint bill of 1853-54:

150 ^d Zinc White	@ 10	55.00
166 ^d yell Ochre	@ 4	6.64
12 Galls Japan	@ 1.25	15.00
40 ^d Verd Green	@ 30	12.00
16 ^d Black paint	@ 12 1/2	2.00
4 Galls Spirits T.	@ 55	3.80
17 ^d Paris Green	@ 33	5.61
137 Galls Red ^d oil	@ 90	105.30
1 Galls Zinc Dryer	@ 2.25	4.30
182 ^d Verm ^d Red	@ 8 1/4	9.16

1 1/2 Galls Copall Varnish	\$ 4.00	6.00
1/2 Quire Sand Paper	0 20	15

Although the paint bill includes some materials for the interior, several items are significant to our problem. You will notice the large amounts of ochre and red (the cheapest pigments), which would thus be suited to large external areas. I interpret this, together with the Deland statement of 1901, the photograph and the rest, to mean that in 1853-54 the brick walls were painted red with white pencilled joints. There is no doubt in my mind that in 1853-54 the cupola, cornice, balustrade, and portico were painted ochre (not varnished). It appears to me also that the window shutters were painted green. The painting of the exterior ironwork (railings, balustrade slatters, etc.) was included in the interior specific items, stating that all exposed ironwork was to "have two coats of iron, zinc sine and linseed oil paint laid on in the best manner and finished off with another coat of similar paint tinted to a bronze color."

A picture of the Custom House as it was remodelled in 1853-54 emerges clearly. The original picture of the building as it was finished in 1819 is more difficult to recapture, because the documents are less complete. The painting contract was let to Samuel Simonds of Salem, who agreed to paint all of the exterior woodwork of the Custom House, specifically including balustrades, doors, windows, window shutters, coving, portico, and railings, at ten shillings per day for labor, one shilling per pound for paint, 10/6 per gallon for oil, and nine pence per pound for putty. The agreement included the labor for glazing the windows, and the bill came to \$98.15 for the outside painting. Colors are not specified either in contract or vouchers; however, I believe that our paint sample of 1958 indicates that the portico, balustrade, cornice, etc. were painted ochre, as they were in 1853-54.

There is no suggestion in the surviving original documents that the exterior brickwork was painted in 1818-19; although painting brickwork was certainly known in Salem by that time, for the Salem diarist Bentley (vol. IV, p. 313), writing in 1791, says that a "mixture of oil, sand & pitch is used to keep water from soaking through brick walls. Would not disparting do better?" Nevertheless, in the absence of documentation and knowing the financial difficulties in getting the original building finished, I am strongly inclined to believe that the brick walls were not painted until 1853-54.

The original color of the exterior ironwork is not indicated in the documents. The window shutters were probably painted green. A lot of green was used in the interior painting; in fact, green is the only pigment specified. The shutters were certainly a part of the original building, although not included in the first contract. They were an extra, added during the course of construction: nine pairs of shutters for the first story windows at \$10.87 1/2 extra per window. Being an afterthought, they do not fit very well about the columns when open. The shutters are apparently the ones included in the photograph of the 1850's.

Based on the foregoing, my recommendation is to leave the brickwork natural as at present, repainting where necessary of course. Restore the limestone belt course, window sills and sills on the side walls with hard white stone, to match the marble on the front, as they undoubtedly were originally. (This corresponds to frequent false usage of the time.) Paint the portico, balustrade, cornice, and cupola in terra. Restore the first-story shutters and paint them green. Paint the exterior framework to look like bronze, as it was in 1858 and may have been in 1839.

Yours sincerely,

Wm. Allen Cassady
Associate Professor of Architecture

WAC/ja

cc: Mr. Lousen
Mr. Holligan
(enclosed)